Critical Analysis of the Production of Western Knowledge and Its Implications for Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonization

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Abstract

There has been a persistent contest among contemporary scholars over what is considered legitimate knowledge. This contest has implications on ways of knowing, organizing society, and responding to environmental challenges. The Western education system is a hybrid of different knowledge, adopted through European global expansion, to enrich our learning in formal educational settings. This article examines the production of Western knowledge and its validation, imposition, and effects on indigenous people and their knowledge. The author argues that there is a relationship between knowledge producers and their motives with the society in which they live. This relationship influences what is considered "legitimate knowledge" in society, politics, and economy in non-Western contexts.

Keywords

decolonization, denigration, indigenous knowledge, knowledge production, Western knowledge

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The production of "legitimate" knowledge has been closely related to the context, class affiliation, and the social identity of the producers. Knowledge producers, politics, class affiliation, and group identity symbiotically influence each other in a complex manner, creating a hybrid knowledge that is a product of such interactions. The hybrid knowledge remains a controversial issue within the study of Western knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and decolonization, since colonial knowledge is a hybrid of local context, class, and ethnic interactions. European colonizers have defined legitimate knowledge as Western knowledge, essentially European colonizers' ways of knowing, often taken as objective and universal knowledge. Arriving with the colonizers and influenced by Western ethnocentrism, Western knowledge imposed a monolithic world view that gave power and control in the hands of Europeans. It delegitimized other ways of knowing as savage, superstitious, and primitive.

The delegitimization of indigenous knowledge by Western scholars, according to Karl Mannheim (1936), implies that in order to understand a social phenomenon, such as knowledge, we must study the social circumstance within which the knowledge has been conceived and born. Mannheim points out that the sociology of knowledge should analyze the relationship between knowledge and existence. Its study should appreciate the close relations between individuals, groups, and the entire situations out of which the knowledge or theories about the world arose in addition to a critical examination of the propagators of the theories. Knowledge production suggests that knowledge is always knowing, a transitive verb always in fluctuation, descriptive, and incomplete (Conway, 2004). The examination of the relationship between individual and society in knowledge production means that we should study the society and the individual to uncover the deeper meanings embedded and represented by the knowledge produced. For indigenous society and decolonization purposes, understanding the colonial society, the colonizers, and their relationship with non-Western society would reveal, to some extent, the intentions of the colonizers within the imperial enterprise of domination and exploitation.

This article argues that to understand the marginalization of indigenous knowledge, we need to examine the knowledge producers and their social, economic, and political positions within the colonial contexts. This intimate relationship often formed the foundation for Western knowledge's domination and subjugation of indigenous knowledge. This article is divided into four parts. The first part defines indigenous knowledge. The second part reviews the literature on knowledge production and situates the study within anticolonial, indigenous-knowledge, and transformative-learning theoretical

frameworks. The third part examines the implication of Western knowledge production on indigenous knowledge, and the last part is a conclusion.

Definition of Indigenous Knowledge

The definition of indigenous knowledge varies according to the diverse perspectives and life experiences of scholars. According to Kincheloe (2006), indigenous knowledge refers to a multidimensional body of understandings that have, especially since the beginnings of the European scientific revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries, been viewed by European culture as inferior, superstitious, and primitive. For indigenous people from North America, Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and parts of Europe, indigenous knowledge is a lived world, a form of reason that informs and sustains people who make their homes in a local area. From their perspectives, indigenous knowledge is a bridge between human beings and their environments. It is the body of historically constituted knowledge that is instrumental in the long-term adaptation of human groups to the biophysical environment (Purcell, 1998).

Indigenous knowledge is a complex accumulation of local context-relevant knowledge that embraces the essence of ancestral knowing as well as the legacies of diverse histories and cultures. It represents essentially a "speaking back" to the production, categorization, and position of cultures, identities, and histories (Dei, 2008). To indigenous communities, indigenous knowledge is a viable tool for reclaiming their context-relevant ways of knowing that have deliberately been suppressed by Western knowledge and often branded as inferior, superstitious, and backward. The research on indigenous knowledge should focus on systematically unraveling power relations that have assured the dominance of particular ways of knowing in the academy. In essence, keeping indigenous knowledge alive amounts "to resistance, refusal, and transformation" of our perspective of knowledge (Dei, 2008). The dominance of Western ways of knowing in Western academies and global social relations should not undermine the value of indigenous knowledge for continual community existence in a particular indigenous context.

Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks

The debates on the creation of knowledge have preoccupied many scholars because of the realization of the link between society and the individual who generates knowledge. While scholars like Gerard (1941) have suggested that truth is relative but not absolute because of the influence of society, class,

and group affiliation in society, truth is also a matter of perspectives. We can speak in qualified terms about knowledge, and the claim to true knowledge is questionable. Karl Manheim (1936) observes that knowledge should be related to the groups or individuals from which it comes. And this means that the ideas expressed by individuals should be understood within the social existence of the individuals. Dewey (1938) states that anything that can be called a study—whether arithmetic, history, geography, or one of the natural sciences—must be derived from materials that at the outset fall within the scope of ordinary life experience. There appears a consensus that our every-day life experiences are significant for articulating indigenous knowledge that is central to our harmonious existence with our surroundings. Herbert Sprott (1954) observes that knowledge is socially determined by a given purpose of the society. The social determination of knowledge to serve a given purpose constitutes the project of knowledge creation (Dahlke & Becker, 1954). Knowledge production is a function of social processes and structures, on the one hand, and the pattern of intellectual life, including the modes of knowing, to respond to challenges of the community. Knowledge production by individuals is related to the project of the community and to the challenges that community intends to meet. If that challenge is imperial control, that knowledge would justify imperialism and domination. Its values for emancipating the colonized would be limited, and often counterproductive, to decolonization projects.

In dealing with the emancipator value of knowledge, Conway (2004) observes that the problem of knowledge for social movements is not simply or primarily one of appropriating and disseminating received knowledge but is about producing the knowledge and identities that are constitutive of emancipator agency. The production of knowledge for emancipator value should be engineered by individuals whose purpose is to expose the subjugation and mobilize for liberation. That individual taking the task is located within society, and when that knowledge becomes that emancipator norm of society, it influences that society for liberation. This implies that individuals as products of their society also influence society. In the process of knowledge production, individual and society influence each other intimately. Any knowledge produced by any individual is, therefore, not objective but reflective of the society in which the individual is raised. The argument for a universal and objective knowledge, as represented by claims of colonial scholarships, is a fallacy, albeit one that is hard to eradicate.

The complicity between colonial knowledge and the forms of subjugation and administration of other cultures shifts the analysis toward an examination of the discursive mechanism, such as Orientalism. In its manifestation,

Orientalism is the process of colonial production of knowledge of the Orient and subjugation of groups deemed to be Orientals (Meyda, 1998, p. 16). Western knowledge in its literary form is not just a functional interrelationship between society and individuals but harbors motives that may well become disparaging and colonizing to non-Western ways of knowing. Western educational systems undoubtedly helped create and maintain the colonizing knowledge system, with its glaring disparities and inequities structured along lines of ethnicity, culture, language, gender, and class (Dei, 2008). The colonized society upon which Western knowledge was imposed needed to understand that kind of knowledge and its motives and compare them to their indigenous way of knowing. Failing to do so would lead to misapprehension and distortion of the indigenous knowledge. To appreciate this perspective, Kincheloe (2006) argues,

> With the birth of modernity, the scientific revolution and the colonial policy they spawned, many pre-modern indigenous ontologies were lost. Ridiculed by Europeans as primitive, the indigenous ways of being were often destroyed by the colonial conquerors of not only the military but the political, religious and educational variety as well. . . . Western, often Christian, observers condescendingly labeled such perspectives as pantheism or nature worship and positioned them as enemy of monotheism. . . . European Christian modernism transformed the individual from a connected participant in the drama of nature to a detached, objective, depersonalized observer. (p. 136)

To stress the importance of indigenous knowledge as a tool for decolonization, researchers need to appreciate the complexity of the structures of colonialism and its neocolonial forms. Moreover, attempts to engage indigenous knowledge for community development should not blind researchers to myriad modes of ideological domination and the theoretical lure of Western knowledge to negatively affect thoughts and actions. Such attraction could only lead researchers to socioeconomic and political disengagement from the campaigns against dominance by Eurocentric knowledge in the education system.

When knowledge is produced, conceived as civilized, and imposed by dominant groups onto others without the due consent of the recipient populace, the knowledge would tend to favor the producers at the expense of its recipients, hence domination of foreign knowledge. Knowledge production for any society by hegemonic groups easily leads to domination, oppression, and control, which is not in the best interest of the beneficiary society.

Dominant groups produce subjective knowledge in order to produce more credible and effective socioeconomic and political perspectives for whatever struggle they are engaged in. The relationship of exchange that binds together virtually all groups participating in that kind of society is what really makes social entity, what constitutes it both conceptually and practically (Adorno, 2002). This relationship can be exploitative, as in the colonial project, and liberating, as in the case of community assistance and survival.

Knowledge production should be examined from the perspectives of struggles among different groups that constitute a society (Haraway, 1998). What could count as rational knowledge in society is often a product of a contest among constituent groups. Politics, ethnicities, and group ideologies influence the notion of rational knowledge. Rational knowledge of either the colonial or dominant group variant is simply impossible to ascertain and remains an optical illusion that should disabuse claims for universal and objective knowledge. Histories of science may be powerfully told as histories of the movement and adoption of technologies over time. These technologies are ways of life, social orders, and practices of visualization inherent in a particular society. Local knowledge may also exist in tension with productive technologies that have not been adopted and acculturated as indigenous ways of knowing and survival. The literature reviews inform an indigenous-knowledge discursive framework and anticolonial and transformative-learning theoretical frameworks.

The study uses an indigenous-knowledge discursive framework and anti-colonial and transformative-learning theoretical frameworks. This will be supplemented with the works of Dei (2002b, 2008), Wane (2002, 2009), Kincheloe (2006), Semali and Kincheloe (1999), and Smith (1999), illuminating the study from a multidisciplinary perspectives. Dei, Hall, and Rosenberg (2000) engage an anticolonial discursive framework as a dialogue, pointing out that power and discourse are not solely exhibited by the "colonizer." Discursive agency and power of resistance reside in and among the colonized and marginalized groups; anticolonial theorizing arises out of alternative, oppositional paradigms, which are in turn based on indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference.

Anticolonial frameworks offer broad, multifaceted interpretation of the processes indigenous people go through wherever colonization has existed. One of the most damaging aspects of the colonized struggle for freedom is the internalization and the acceptance of the dominant discourses that marginalize the culture of the colonized and exalt the colonizers' cultural values as universal. The processes of colonization involved rewriting history to denying the colonized's existence, devaluating their knowledge, and

debasing their cultural beliefs and practices (Wane, 2006). For any meaningful struggle for decolonization, a critical consideration of this process is instrumental. The colonized should engage with indigenous-knowledge discursive frameworks and anticolonial and transformative-learning theories to pave the way for a clear understanding of the process of knowledge production.

Transformative learning theory, on the other hand, guides and challenges the way we receive and interrogate issues regarding indigenous people and their ways of knowing and empower us to critically analyze issues that are of pertinent concern to indigenous people. It empowers indigenous people to resist oppressions and domination by strengthening the individual holistically. A critical understanding of transformative learning is that education should be able to resist oppression and domination by strengthening the individual self and the collective soul to deal with the continued reproduction of colonial and recolonial relations in the academy (Dei, 2002a). This view clearly links transformative learning to holistic education, which is meant to create a holistic individual equipped with the genes of maturity to detect and resist treatment of inequality. Elsewhere, the educational vision encompasses the awe and majesty of the universe as well as the extraordinary capacities of humans to make meaning and create cultural and social structures (Purcell, 1998). It is an education that commits itself to recreating human consciousness and structures in order to make real our dreams for justice, harmony, peace, and joy.

These theories harmonize each other by equipping the colonized psyche with the tools to weaken and oppose colonial hegemonic dogma and instead to view such dogma as local, imposed, dominating, oppressive, and harboring selfish motives. The realization that indigenous people's knowledge or ways of understanding reality are vastly relevant to the people and their locale and are the foundation on which their existence revolves is imperative for scholars and practitioners. Accordingly, Semali and Kincheloe (1999) emphasized this point to scholars and practitioners, that local indigenous wisdom embodied experiential and context-relevant aspirations regarding socioeconomic developments. This realization opens possibilities for moving beyond the current fragmentation of indigenous knowledge and continuous viewing of the colonizers with lenses of cynicism. It also invites those engaged in the decolonization processes to participate in knowledge production that empowers indigenous intellectual resources for the continued existence of their society with their indigenous ways of knowing at the forefront. Indigenous knowledge anchors indigenous identity within history outside Euro-American hegemonic constructions of the other (Dei, 2008). In a

diaspora context, indigenous discursive frameworks nurture a cultural rebirth and revival reflecting the integrity and pride in self, culture, history, and heritage as a commitment to the collective good and well-being of all peoples. The ideas and principles of indigenous-knowledge discursive frameworks are rooted and actionable in local and grassroots political organizing and a form of intellectual activism. Discursively, this framework affirms a local, national, and international consciousness and an understanding of the politics of "national cultural liberation" that is matched with political sophistication and intricacies.

Implications of Western Knowledge Production on Indigenous Knowledge

The discussions related to Western knowledge production and its implications to indigenous knowledge are so crucial since we commonly view formal education as sites in which knowledge is produced and transmitted to learners from teachers, academic literatures, and other materials. Wotherspoon (2004) elaborates that we must recognize that knowledge is not only disseminated, but also produced, in educational settings. Participants at all levels of the educational system contribute to knowledge production in a variety of ways through discussions, problem solving, and engagement in everyday activities. Knowledge is shaped not only as it is continuously interpreted, processed, and reinterpreted in the interactions among instructors and learners in educational settings but also through the experiences and understandings brought in from outside schooling. When knowledge is produced by an external actor and imposed on an educational system or society, it becomes biased and negatively influences the indigenous knowledge of a people; this external imposition is disempowering and colonizing. In a similar vein, "the production of knowledge, new knowledge and transformed 'old' knowledge by the colonizers" becomes a commodity of colonial exploitation (Smith, 1999, p. 59). This negative interaction between Western knowledge imposed on an indigenous cosmology tends to undermine the norms, values, and gendered contexts that maintain morality and harmony. Unfortunately, in the contemporary education system, Western knowledge does not give indigenous knowledge any considerable credibility, thus intellectually marginalizing it. This is because individual knowledge reproducers in society impose their project on other societies and educational systems by reproducing subjective, repressive knowledge. The imposition by individual knowledge producers detrimentally affects the society by ignoring the basic

principles of indigenous knowledge, which are the foundation of indigenous societies. To remedy this apparent oversight in African societies, Shockley and Frederick (2010) identify seven fundamental constructs or principles of Afrocentric education thus:

> Identity—the importance of identifying the Black child as an African; Pan-Africanism—the idea that all Black people in the world are Africans; African culture—the long standing tradition of Blacks using African culture to sustain themselves and bring order to their lives and communities; African values adoption and transmission—inclusion of an African ethos into educational process for Black children; Black nationalism—the idea that Blacks, regardless of their specific location, constitute a "nation"; community control with institution building—the ability to make important decisions about the institutions that exist in one's community; and education as opposed to schooling—education is the process of imparting on children all things they need to provide leadership within their communities and within their nation, while schooling is a training process. (p. 1214)

To understand how deeply a system of knowledge may be influenced by the individual and the society, I will illuminate how Western knowledge was entrenched through formal education in Uganda. Also, the implications of Western knowledge production on indigenous knowledge during colonial times in Uganda are examined.

Western Knowledge Production in Colonial Contexts in Uganda

In Ugandan society, Western knowledge production was entrenched through formal education. The introduction of Western education in Uganda was first started by White Christian missionaries for the purpose of enhancing the evangelization of Africans as converts to Christianity. The provision of Western knowledge through Christian education was presented by the missionaries as civilization. Since the main objective of the missionaries was to convert Africans to Christian religion, young Africans were taken away from their homes to seclude them from indigenous knowledge and traditional education (see Akena, 2010).

The need to train Black clergy, who would become agents of the missionaries among their own people, led to the establishment of formal schools. The main source of their training knowledge was centered on the Bible, and the

inculcation of biblical knowledge was thought to liberate Africans from their tradition, spirituality, and knowledge. This kind of knowledge was not designed to free Africans, and in particular, Ugandans, from backwardness. Its central purpose was to convert Africans who would further the missionary enterprise and later consolidate colonial rule (Akena, 2010). The disparaging of traditional education negatively affected traditional knowledge, which had sustained humanity for time immemorial and had been the source of remedies for multiple societal anomalies. With the disparagement, African creativity for liberation from intellectual dependence and oppression was difficult.

Christian Missionary Education Policy

The first European Christian missionaries arrived in Uganda in 1877. These were members of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from England. Two years later, Roman Catholic missionaries, in particular, the Mill Hill Fathers, followed. However, attempts by European missionaries to get a foothold in Uganda from 1877 to 1894 suffered severe setbacks from the political upheavals at the royal court of Kabaka (King) Mutesa of Buganda and the subsequent religious war in Buganda (Akena, 2010). The conflict arose principally because Kabaka Mutesa was not interested in the Christian religion for most of his life until his death in 1884. When his son, Mwanga, was enthroned as successor, he inherited a faction-ridden court among traditionalists, Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants. The divisions led to war between the main European factions, the *Wa-Ingreza* (English) versus the *Wa-Franza* (French Catholics).

Captain Lugard, a British army officer employed by the Imperial British East Africa Company, tilted the outcome of the war in favor of the *Wa-Ingreza* by arming their fighters and throwing his weight behind them with the Maxim gun. A truce was reached between the main religious factions in 1893, and the need for stability forced the British colonial authority to declare protectorate status over Uganda in 1894. This empowered the Protestant missionaries to proceed with evangelization work in Buganda (Adyanga, 2011, p. 15). European Christian evangelization was predicated upon a negative and evolutionary view of non-Western cultures by Europeans. This led them to presume that Africans needed change. Westermann (1937), in *Africa and Christianity*, writes,

> These pagan Africans are more easily convinced to adopt a new faith, because in his own religion he has little to lose than people adhering to a higher religion, and the adoption of Christianity included for him membership in a higher social class. . . . The missionary is—and must

be—inexorable in trying to exterminate everything connected with the old religion, because his experience has taught him that any form of syncretism is the death of genuine Christian life. (p 134-135)

The conviction among Christian missionaries that African indigenous knowledge and religious values were inferior led them to try by all means to purge Africans of their spiritual and knowledge grounding. In the process of facilitating evangelization, they followed a classic and favored conversion paradigm that had been used before, dating back to the 20th century. This was known as concentration versus diffusion. The proponents of the concentration paradigm proceeded from the perspective that in their work, they needed to isolate and to protect converts from backsliding to their traditional belief systems. They recognized their work as a gradual but sure means to the establishment of a coherent Christian community. In East Africa in general, and in Uganda, in particular, Christian missionaries built many elementary and industrial schools and churches. The main aim of the schools was to create an institutional environment that was conducive to imparting Western culture, initially to sons and relatives of chiefs from the kingdoms of Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro, and Toro. The graduates from these schools would then be used to impart Western cultures, knowledge, and religion in their communities (Adyanga, 2011, p. 17).

The boarding school's curriculum was centered on imparting rudimentary Bible literacy among aspiring African converts. The other subjects taught included basic reading, writing, and arithmetic. Pupils aspiring for baptism were expected to demonstrate competency in the Bible by persuasively reading at least two Gospels; and for confirmation, a higher literacy standard was to be achieved. Those aspiring to train as low-grade catechist leaders were required to demonstrate basic reading, writing, geography, and scriptures as deemed necessary for furthering evangelical work. They trained for a period of 1 year in Gospel, three of four Epistles, and some selected books of the Old Testament; the Prayer Books; Thirty-Nine Articles; and necessary secular subjects. Their training was so poor, according to Tom Tuma (1978), that as late as 1953 in Busoga, as elsewhere in Uganda, the catechist leaders could not adequately explain the Gospel. Whether this was done on purpose or by omission is not clear. Nonetheless, the emphasis was really on piety, which encouraged Africans to shun their traditional beliefs and customary practices and instead commit themselves to live in a Christian community. In all of those, academic education took second place to piety. In fact, the focus on religion and religious life was so intense that deviation by pupils risked punishment by excommunication (Adyanga, 2011, p. 17).

Missionary education was geared so much to systematic indoctrination that when the younger pupils completed their school term, the missionary educators were not eager to send them home for vacation. Missionaries often maintained, among other considerations, that if African convert students returned home, they would be exposed to evil influences embedded in African culture and homes, thus diluting Christian influence. With collaboration from leading chiefs in Buganda, they proposed two approaches to seclude African pupils from their cultures and knowledge system. The first was for students to live with chiefs chosen for their piety. The second was for students to go to camps. Both approaches were adopted because they allowed for close monitoring, supervision, and control of daily lives of African converts. Such total control of converts in the 20th century, according to Bengt Sundkler (1960), created Christian villages on a theocratic ideal, where Christians could form a new tribe of Christ under the missionary or the African catechist as chief.

From such intensely religious control, the missionaries expected that when the African pupils became chiefs or functionaries of the colonial system in the future, they would live piously and further embark on proselytization of other Africans by outlawing traditional religion and belief systems. According to C. W. Hattersley (1908), a White CMS missionary, this was a successful approach. He observed that when a young chief from a district in Busoga went home for Christmas holidays, he was welcomed with great rejoicing, feasting, and dancing. But the young chief, who had received good Christian training at Mengo, immediately rejected African traditional celebrations, asserting them to be obscene (Adyanga, 2011, p. 20). To the Christian missionaries, the disavowal of African traditional values and knowledge system was a remarkable indication that the influence of Christianity was increasing among African leaders.

It is apparent that European Christian missionary exclusion of converts from their cultures produced Anglophiles who lived in a more or less artificial world of their own, as they were confused whether they belonged to the African or the European world, which did not quite fully accept them. Cut off from the mass of the African population but always looking to their newly acquired colonial masters for instruction and guidance, the disoriented and alienated African pupils from their traditional cultures were left without proper anchors. In traditional African societies, the elder chiefs in each society were expected to teach young boys the history of their ancestors: the customs and the laws of their communities. However, with missionary education, African values were simply denigrated, often characterized as savage, primitive, brute, and evil. McGavran (1970), a missionary himself, decried the deliberate attempts to promote a picture of benighted misery, ignorance, and cruelty in

traditional African life. Yet encouraging stereotypes of Africans was a pliant propaganda tool that resonated with Christians in Europe who had to support mission work by providing monetary donations for evangelization. The intense method of indoctrination was tantamount to cultural engineering, to fashion new and different Africans (Adyanga, 2011, p. 18). In a sense then, the missionary schools and camps became factories to produce African converts who facilitated most effectively the control and subjugation of indigenous people and knowledge. This miseducation of Africans by missionary schools produced ill-trained graduates who failed to produce, claim ownership of, and exercise control over public resources and social services. Elsewhere in America, Shockley and Frederick (2010) criticized the miseducation of Blacks and attributed it to the contemporary problems in the United States. Within the Ugandan context, the providers of formal education failed to grasp that developing curriculum for the education of African children needed to be skewed to the African cultural ethos of the respective community.

It is ironic that in the Christian communities, African converts were not taught the English language. It appears that White Christian missionaries feared that teaching African converts English would expose them to broader secular ideas that could undermine Christian and colonial ideological control (Temu, 1972). Experiences from India in the 1890s and West Africa, where English was taught, indicate that the educated class from among indigenous Africans became conscious of the contradictions and exploitation by missionary and colonial authorities. In India, graduates formed organizations for fostering political awareness, such as the Surendranath Banerjee's Indian Association and the Indian National Congress, which later threatened the political position of the British Raj. The British government response was to cut off aid to schools teaching English and to encourage indigenous Indian languages to be used in elementary and industrial schools. This method of obstructing the expansion of academic horizons of indigenous people became the official policy in most parts of the empire. Similarly, in West Africa, Sir William MacGregor, the governor of Lagos in Nigeria from 1898 to 1902, accused educated Africans as a class of mission-educated young men who lived in villages, interfered with the native councils, and acted as correspondents for a mendacious native press. A quality education of Africans was thought to have "brought to such men only discontent, suspicion of others, and bitterness, which masqueraded as racial patriotism and the vindication of their rights unjustly," denied by the colonial authorities (Lugard, 1965, p. 438). In the 1930s, Ben N. Azikiwe, a Nigerian nationalist, explained the reasoning that had anchored such an opinion. He wrote,

> So long as the African would be content at menial tasks, and would not seek complete social, political, and economic equality with the Western World, he is deemed to be a "good" fellow. But let him question the right to keep him in political and economic servitude, and let him strive to educate himself to the fundamentals of these modern problems, he is immediately branded as an "agitator." He becomes a "bad" fellow for failing to stay in his "place," which, of course, is the background. (Azikiwe, 1934, p. 146)

Azikiwe felt that it was fair and just for Africans to challenge the inequality of the colonial system and to aspire to governance, economic independence, free thinking, and questioning of ideas (Adyanga, 2011, p. 39). This did not resonate with the colonial masters who brought formal education. To them, education of the Africans was meant to make them take instructions from their colonial masters and also purge their traditional knowledge and belief systems.

To guard against "agitation" by educated Africans in Uganda, the colonial authorities encouraged a mediocre education with Luganda as the lingua franca. Apparently, the thinking was that teaching English would expose Africans to foreign political events and widen their horizons, hence creating trouble and jeopardizing ideological control (Akena, 2010). This view, which retained its currency until the late1930s, was shared by Sir William Gowers, governor of Uganda from 1925 to 1938. He wrote that as long as the function of the missions in education is limited to teaching up to the standard regarded as necessary prior to baptism, that is, reading and writing in a vernacular language, they are doubtless rendering useful service to the community. The focus of missionary education continued to be basic literacy in vernacular languages, evangelism, and demeaning African indigenous knowledge systems.

The Christianized African leaders, having been poorly trained, became the local agents who disparaged their own cultures as shameful and backward in their efforts to spread Christianity. The contempt of African culture undermined their cultural self-confidence. Their weak cultural self-confidence was in turn used by White Europeans to propagate a negative stereotype of Africans as childlike, brute, savage, emotional, heathen, and uncivilized, hence perpetrating the myth that Africans are inferior to White Europeans. Thus, the Christianized African leaders' disdain of their own cultures undermined their own self-confidence; and for their communities, the means to regain self-esteem and humanity were achieved by renouncing traditional knowledge, spirituality, and customary practices. Obviously, the trading off

of African values and practices for those of White Europeans was a powerful tool of ideological indoctrination and control that greatly undermined African indigenous knowledge and its production.

In the industrial schools in Uganda, missionary training followed the policy of focusing mostly on menial work and religious training as a guiding principle. The *Special Reports on Educational Subjects* (Great Britain, 1905) spelled out that the first, and by far the most important, principle of the industrial schools was to educate the head, hands, and heart with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. An overall emphasis was placed on obedience to Christ, the Church, and colonial authorities. The CMS drew on its experience in India and adapted it to Africa, emphasizing that Christian truth is the basis of all that is taught and Christian morals the basis of discipline. Thus, before African converts were taught any other subjects, they had to show that they had absorbed the basic tenets of Christian discipline. Once that was accomplished, the students in the industrial schools would be given instruction in house carpentry, joinery, wood turning, printing, bookbinding, brick making, bricklaying, and house building.

Western knowledge production in Uganda through colonial education was aimed at indoctrinating indigenous Africans to accept their subjugation to the colonial order. The mission education system disparaged African education because the colonists wanted African converts who could be easily controlled. The early African graduates were educated in biblical studies that had nothing to do with the reality of African problems. Since its purpose was to advance evangelization, the African graduates remained in a subordinate position to advance the interests of missionaries to the neglect of their own. The dependence upon the missionaries for theological authority meant that they were easily controlled. With the emergence of colonial administration in the field of education, the African graduates were hardly trained seriously to address African challenges of development and improvement of their citizenry's welfare. They were to become intermediaries in advancing colonial rule. This is pitiable because colonialism never cared about the interests of Africans but used them as cheap laborers to produce primary crops for European industries.

The neglect of education that could promote African interests was functional within the colonial context of control and domination. The African graduates who were indoctrinated in the values of colonialism and Christianity began to despise their own culture and values as savage, backward, and benighted. Instead of trying to improve their own communities with their traditional knowledge system, these elite became caricatures of Europeans. Within this context of existence, they were indoctrinated to accept their

subordinate position within the colonial hierarchy and were often dependent on the colonial administration. This sad trend continues today because the postindependence elite leaders look toward Europe for authority and knowledge when they should be producing knowledge to meet the challenges of African social, political, and economic existence.

This social organization of ideas opens our eyes to the fact that knowledge produced in society by the dominant group is subjective and requires more verification to arrive at objective fact. Yet it is not easy to recover the objective truth, because society limits certain objective truths deemed indigestible, or the power-elite may impose sanctions through fear of harm to society. The limitation is partly due to politics and economic considerations that cloud rational thinking. In the same way, knowledge produced by the colonial agents during encounter and imposed on indigenous people through formal education and Western religions is repressive and destructive to the indigenous knowledge that has held society in peace and harmony for centuries. Knowledge produced by policy makers at a higher level without consulting groups of people or systems on which such knowledge is to be implemented is not healthy for any society and is thus skewed and oppressive. The comprehension of subjective and objective knowledge is thus important for the progress of indigenous societies. Indigenous peoples' progress should be based on indigenous knowledge or a hybrid of knowledge systems that is produced by people who use it or by the educational system responsible for the consumption of such knowledge. Educational sites should consider infusing relevant indigenous knowledge with relevant nonindigenous knowledge for better cross-fertilization of ideas and best practices. Within indigenous contexts, parents, students, community members are bearers of knowledge and should be used as resources by schools. Home and community knowledge must be accessed and the community reconceptualized as a site of knowledge production (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, & Zine, 2000). When elders or parents are given the opportunity to produce and integrate indigenous knowledge in the education system, education sites become reinforced with two systems of knowledge (Western and indigenous), which can coexist and augment the learners' understanding of their cosmology. However, the production and integration of both Western and indigenous ways of knowing into the academe ought to be done with scrutiny. In other words, anyone producing knowledge in a society or education system should investigate the knowledge with a higher sense of neutrality, without personally influencing the outcomes.

Similarly, the imposing of colonial education on the colonized society fashioned Western ways of knowing that proved disparaging to indigenous

knowledge and culture. One of the strategies of Western European models of schooling was to universalize education (Wane, 2009). However, what the promoters of this grand idea did not spell out was that the internationalization of curriculum would be skewed toward Eurocentric paradigms, particularly, British and French paradigms. There was no consideration of local knowledge or local people's everyday experiences. Such knowledge was seen as either nonexistent or of little value. The dominance of Eurocentric knowledge over indigenous ways of knowing undoubtedly creates inequality, which results in conflict and failure of the education system, since any questioning of the dominant ways of knowing is seen as primitive and uncivilized. To remedy the inequality in knowledge production, societies need to decolonize from the dominant system of knowledge. The key question remains: How do we decolonize from the dominant knowledge system entrenched in our society and education system?

Uganda is currently attempting to integrate traditional knowledge in its curricula by introducing native languages in the education system as a tool to improve learning and decolonizing from the colonizers' dominant language and ways of knowing. Since it is too early to make an informed opinion of the Ugandan education school reforms, it is proper to acknowledge that we cannot have indigenous knowledge survive either in the educational system or in the community without the presence of indigenous language. This does not, however, negate the relevance of embracing Western dominant languages, for they are required for reaching out to a wider audience globally in the decolonization project for indigenous ways of knowing to gain recognition. Indigenous languages are repositories of customs, values, and cultures of the indigenous communities. By keeping them in the education system as a course of instruction and also a means of communication, the learners' conceptions and application of concepts are widely reinforced.

The advocates of Western-dominant ways of knowing, however, argue that the notion of truth is subjective due to individuals' interpretation and society of abode. We will never get rid of subjectivity based on the context and education. However, we must also realize that foreign-imposed knowledge is not objective and universal. The best way to negotiate this difficult challenge is to approach each knowledge system with humility, ascribing to it the value it deserves for improving human welfare (Dove, 2010). The conveyance of indigenous knowledge is best achieved through promoting indigenous cultures and languages. This implies that education systems should not embark on mandatory assimilation of dominant knowledge over indigenous knowledge. The caveat we need for the realization of an informed integration of knowledge systems is that knowledge production and reproduction depend

on individuals and societies in which they live. Therefore, to assume that knowledge producers can remain neutral without any personal interest is too much to bargain for in any society or educational system. To effectively introduce indigenous knowledge as a decolonization tool from the dominant Western knowledge, society and educators have to decide whether it is a cultural fair that they are choosing to display for their students or whether they seek to develop a pedagogy that will allow students the broadest academic possibilities for understanding the multiple histories and ways of knowing that continue to propel humanity toward a higher level of social and cultural development. Any study of indigenous knowledge must allow for its evolution and ever-changing relationship to Eurocentric knowledge. However, essentializing indigenous knowledge undermines this relational dynamic, since it encodes indigenous ways as nature and Eurocentric ways as reason. This is problematic because the authentication of Eurocentric knowledge over indigenous knowledge relegates indigenous knowledge to a lower echelon of knowledge production, validation, and dissemination.

Conclusion

The theoretical analysis shows that building a powerful decolonization tool through the construction and maintenance of high-quality institutions pursuing the common objectives of breaking the chains of colonization remains a vital task. Ethnic divisions, religious indifferences, and political and ideological conflicts complicate this already difficult task. Our failure to accept that our knowledge is limited in regard to other societies and their norms is sometimes difficult to admit because of local pride. Furthermore, structures within societies and educational systems propagate ideas that are subjective and deemed to benefit the dominant groups that generate knowledge in that society. The individual must be critically examined and the reasoning and structures that sustain and reproduce that reasoning need critical examinations. Anticolonial theorists have realized that European colonialists have generated knowledge and planted it in the colonized society to dominate, disparage, suppress, and control the indigenous ways of knowing. Unless we generate influential counterdiscourses that see domination and privilege for what they actually are, indigenous worldviews may perish in our sights. Knowledge produced by dominant groups in society has often been a tool of domination, oppression, and exploitation due to unequal power relations. Besides, no single knowledge is innocent, and by engaging in researching and studying any community, we have to interrogate our motives and the prior knowledge we have imbibed about that community (Lauer, 2007).

Individual producers of knowledge intimately influence their societies. It is important to first seek to understand and appreciate other societies before making any judgment and imposing any form of knowledge. In order for Black children to receive an African education, adults who teach Black children must "Africanize" themselves by becoming familiar with the culture, values, folkways, and mores of African groups through processes such as deep study, travel, and initiation (Shockley & Frederick, 2010, p. 1217). The understanding of situated knowledge is instrumental in this case. Unless we locate ourselves in the object of study (knowledge production) and undertake deeper considerations, we would not be making enough progress. Finally, for the study of indigenous knowledge and decolonization, the consideration of the relationship between society, history, and knowledge production leaves one with the need for consistent inquiry, never accepting received knowledge as complete, and continually interrogating the reasons behind the knowledge (Tedia, 1992). The inability to appreciate this by an education system or society removes indigenous knowledge from the lives of indigenous people and delinks it of cultural connections that grant meanings to indigenous people.

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Bio

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